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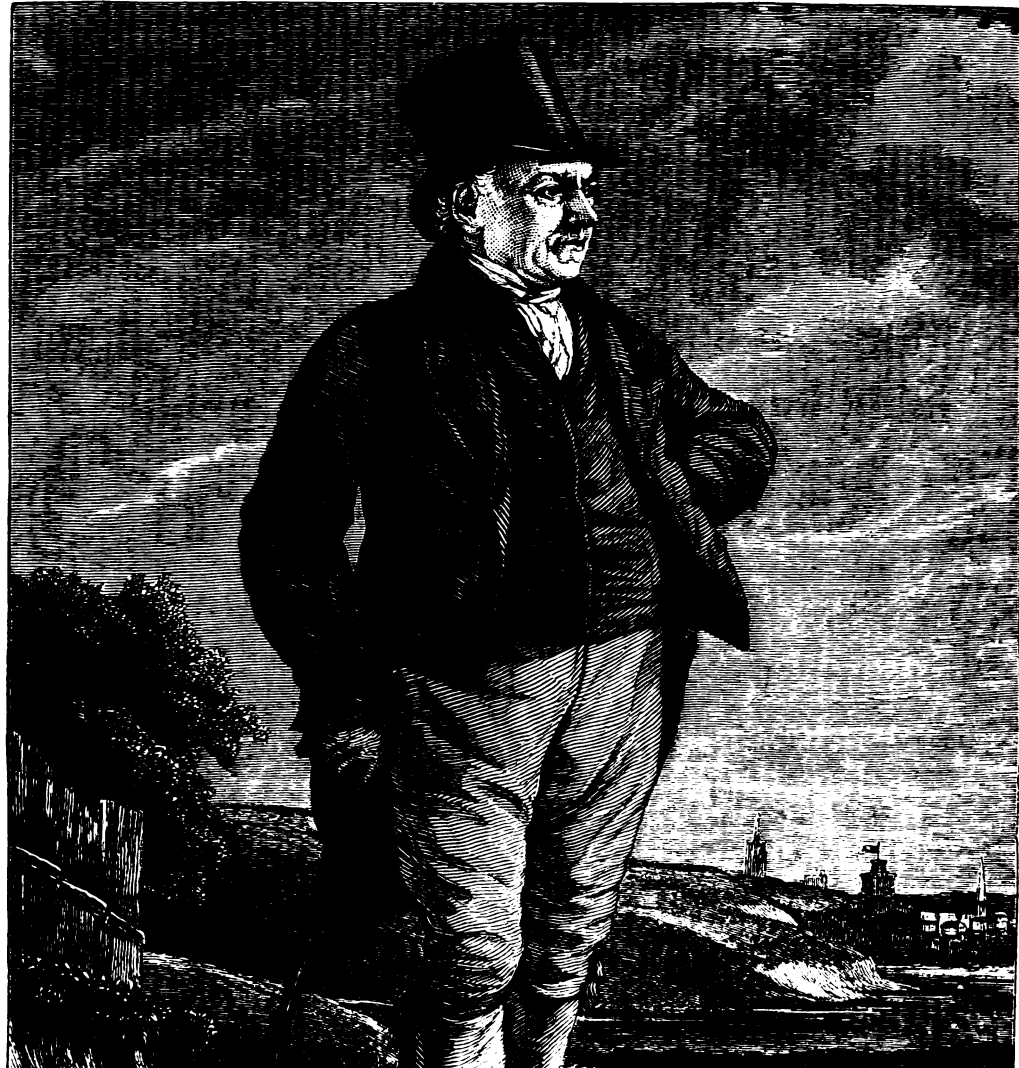
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*"Gay's Fables", "Select
Fables". [and] John Bewick*

Austin Dobson

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Writings of the Poet

JOHN GAY

1685-1732

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Given to the Library in fulfillment
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GEORGE HENRY GAY, June, 1927

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THOMAS BEWICK AND HIS PUPILS

“ He would often professe that to observe the grasse, herbs, corne, trees, cattle, earth, waters, heavens, any of the Creatures, and to contemplate their Natures, orders, qualities, vertues, uses, etc., was ever to him the greatest mirth, content, and recreation that could be : and this he held to his dying day.”

LIFE AND DEATH OF BISHOP ANDREWES, 1650.



THOMAS REWICK.

Frontispiece.

(Ramsay.)

THOMAS BEWICK

AND HIS PUPILS

BY

AUSTIN DOBSON



WITH NINETY-FIVE ILLUSTRATIONS

BOSTON

JAMES R. OSGOOD AND COMPANY

1884

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TO
W. J. LINTON,
ENGRAVER AND POET,
THE STEADFAST APOSTLE OF BEWICK'S "WHITE LINE,"
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED.

Among the wood blocks upon which he was busily engaged during the latter part of that period^{his apprenticeship} were some intended for an edition of "Gay's Fables." Of five of these Mr. Beilby thought so well that he submitted them to the Society of Arts in London, from whom, as already stated, they received the recognition of a premium of seven guineas, which Bewick at once transferred to his mother.

"Gay's Fables," however, were not published until 1779, and long before that date Bewick had quitted Mr. Beilby's shop. p. 33

¹ This must not be confused with the vamped-up volume issued in 1820 by Emerson Charnley under the title of "Select Fables; with Cuts, Designed and Engraved by Thomas and John Bewick and Others [!], previous to the year 1784: Together with a Memoir; and a descriptive Catalogue of the Works of Messrs. Bewick." Charnley, an enterprising Newcastle publisher, had become possessed of the majority of the blocks to the "Select Fables" (1784) and "Gay" (1779). To these he added a number of inferior cuts of early date, done chiefly for Saint, including some by Isaac Nicholson and "others," and he put forth the whole with the above title as "Vol. i. of Bewick's Works." The "Memoir" and "Descriptive Catalogue" were prepared by John Trotter Brockett, author of the "Glossary of North Country Words, in Use," 1825; and Charlton Nesbit, who engraved an

excellent frontispiece-portrait of Bewick, after William Nicholson, repaired and retouched the blocks,—not to their advantage. This volume was produced with little consideration for Bewick's feelings and reputation. Its pretensions are well known to collectors; but Mr. W. J. Linton has recently exposed them at large in the "Academy" for 22d March 1884. pp. 134 + 5.

the original sketch he has a bright blue coat) is intended for Bewick himself. West Spital Tower had been turned into a dwelling-place, where lived Mr. Beilby and his family. Bewick was an enthusiastic florist, and especially fond of roses. His garden, as may be guessed, was a great pleasure to him; and his picturesque red nightcap, encircled by the fumes of his contemplative "churchwarden," might often be detected there on Sunday afternoons.



TAILPIECE. (FROM FERGUSON'S "POEMS," 1814.)

CHAPTER V.

"GAY'S FABLES," "SELECT FABLES."

FOR many years after the termination of his apprenticeship, Bewick appears, by his own account, to have been fully employed upon the business of the firm, which consisted chiefly of work for silversmiths, watchmakers, and hardwaremen. Much time was also occupied in seal-cutting; but engraving on wood, as is clear from the small number of acknowledged works between 1774 and 1784, must have been the exception rather than the rule of his trade. Among the books belonging to this date is the well-known "Tommy Trip's History of Beasts and Birds," published by Saint in 1779, which, owing to the fact that it is supposed by Atkinson and others to have prompted the "Quadrupeds" and "Birds,"

has acquired a factitious reputation with collectors. A limited reprint of this was issued by Mr. Pearson in 1867. It is also probable that Bewick executed a few cuts when in London for Hodgson's "Hieroglyphick Bible," which appeared about this time. This again was a book for children with emblematical cuts of select scenes from the Old and New Testaments. Then there is the "Lilliputian Magazine," the letterpress of which Mr. Pearson boldly attributes to Goldsmith. It was published in 1783 by T. Carnan, the successor of Goldsmith's friend Newbery, but had probably been printed earlier by Saint at Newcastle.¹ The two volumes, however, with which we are most concerned during this period are the "Fables by

¹ The following passage respecting "Tommy Trip" and Goldsmith is taken from one of Miss Jane Bewick's letters to Mr. Edward Ford, of Old Park, Enfield, and has been kindly communicated to us by that gentleman :—

"My sister lately drew my attention to the passage you quote in the 'Vicar of Wakefield' (Goldsmith's charming little puff [in chapter xviii.] of his children's books, published by Newbery), 'Tommy Trip and his Dog Jowler,' and 'Woglog the Giant.' Well do I remember the little book—amongst many charming Newberys still preserved, that treasure has disappeared. We had it before we could read. The book contained many cuts of animals (a crocodile among the rest), the descriptions of which

the late Mr. Gay" of 1779, and the "Select Fables" of 1784, both of which were printed and published by Saint. In these, rather than the foregoing, interesting as those are from the collector's point of view, Bewick's work began its true development, and they alone constitute his real beginnings.

The illustrations to "Gay's Fables," it has been stated, had been begun during Bewick's apprenticeship. In advertising them Saint referred to the "finely engraved frontispiece" and "very curious cuts," some of which had "gained the premium of the Royal Society [*sic*]." The

were probably compiled by Goldsmith. The cuts must have been executed while my father was in London.

"I have often heard my father tell that, when he was very young, a stranger travelling on foot, and dressed in a sky-blue coat, with immensely large cuffs, called at Cherryburn, where he had some refreshment. Whilst resting, he conversed with my grandmother, and when he left she observed to her sister Hannah: 'That is no common person.' The impression made on the child (Goldsmith was sure to have noticed the little black-eyed boy) was so strong that the first time he saw a portrait of Goldsmith he felt certain that it was the poet himself who had called in. One may suppose the fare offered to have been eggs and bacon with home-brewed birch-wine, which my grandmother used to make by tapping the birch trees."

"finely engraved frontispiece" was a poor copperplate by Beilby of the monument which Gay's patrons, the Queensberrys, had erected to him in Westminster Abbey, and it was manifestly copied from Scotin's engraving after Gravelot in the Lon-



THE HOUND AND THE HUNTSMAN. (FROM "GAY'S FABLES," 1779.)

don edition of 1738. The "curious cuts" were sixty-seven in number, not including thirty-three vignettes. Of the five approved by the "Society of Arts," the "Old Hound" ("The Hound and the Huntsman") is the only one which has been identified. The others, probably executed at different times between 1773 and 1779, are of very various

merit. Many of them plainly reproduce the compositions of William Kent, Wootton the animal painter, and Gravelot, in the first editions of the two series of "Gay's Fables," issued by Tonson and Knapton in 1727 and 1738 respectively. Whether Bewick made use of these books directly, or followed some intermediate copyist, such as the unknown artist of Strahan's complete edition of 1769, is immaterial. But a comparison of his illustrations with the earlier ones establishes a remarkable relationship, especially in the more allegorical or mythological subjects. In the unpleasant "Universal Apparition," the design is almost exactly similar to that of 1727; the same remark applies, more or less, to the "Miser and Plutus," "Pythagoras and the Countryman," the "Monkey who had seen the World," and others. In all of these, as a rule, Bewick has the advantage in drawing and accessory, although his delineations of nude figures and personifications of any kind are never his happiest work. In the "Farmer's Wife and the Raven," and the "Courtier and Proteus," though still mindful of

the earlier plate, he produces something infinitely better. The former, with its bridge and castle in the background, and the hopeless collapse of "blind Ball" and his rider in front, is one of the best pictures in the book; and the persuasive man of the world, with his hand, like that of his prototype, on his heart, might have stepped from a canvas by Hogarth. So might the really admirable figure of the bullying and belligerent virago with arms akimbo, in the "Scold and the Parrot." In the "Hare and Many Friends" the arrangement of the first illustrator, Wootton, is almost entirely discarded; and the gasping, pathetic posture of "Poor honest Puss" appealing vainly to the calf is worthy of a Landseer in little. Now and then, again, Bewick's knowledge of domestic animals or his keen eye for character overmaster him entirely, and he breaks away from the model altogether. "The Hound and the Huntsman" is a case in point; it might have been sketched at Cherryburn.¹ Other examples in this class are

¹ An original pencil sketch for "The Hound and the Huntsman" is in the possession of Mr. Edward Ford, who obtained it from Miss Jane Bewick.

"The Man, the Cat, the Dog, and the Fly," and "The Squire and his Cur." These two are not so much illustrations of Gay as little pictures in *genre*. In one the country gentleman, mottled-faced and condescending, listens with dignity to the tenant, who,

" in a bondman's key,
With 'bated breath, and whispering humbleness,"

addresses his patron; in the other an old officer, with his hanger and cocked hat on the wall—a true contemporary of Le Fevre and "My Uncle Toby"—is talking to his dog and cat in a room whose conspicuous decoration is a print of a naval engagement. These, as far as we can ascertain, are Bewick's own, and they are of the best.

Generally speaking, the printing of all these cuts, even in the earlier editions (and it is absolutely useless to consult any others), is weak and unskilful. The fine work of the backgrounds is seldom thoroughly made out, and the whole impression is blurred and unequal. Nevertheless, as book illustrations, in detail, composition, and especially in expression, they are far beyond any-

thing of the kind that had appeared before, except a few cuts by Bewick himself, to which we now come.

The other book of importance belonging to this period is the "Select Fables," published by Saint in 1784. Its full title is "Select Fables, in Three Parts. Part I. Fables extracted from Dodsley's. Part II. Fables with Reflections, in Prose and Verse. Part III. Fables in Verse. To which are prefixed, The Life of Æsop; and an Essay upon Fable. A New Edition, improved. Newcastle: Printed by and for T. Saint. MDCCLXXXIV." In reference to the words "a new edition, improved," it will be remembered that, as already stated on p. 32, Saint had in 1772 issued a small number of "Select Fables" at the end of the "Moral Instructions of a Father to his Son," etc., the cuts to which were said by Miss Bewick to have been her father's early work. Of this book Saint brought out a third edition in 1775; and in 1776 he issued a volume of "Select Fables" only, of which the "Select Fables" of 1784 is obviously an elaboration. In fact, the title-pages are almost

textually identical, and the same emblematic vignette is used for both. The volume of 1776 contains one hundred and fourteen small and poorly executed cuts, and, at the end of the book, in illustration of the "Fables in Verse (Part III.)," are fourteen larger and better cuts, with borders. The smaller cuts, which include those in the "Moral Instructions," are, we must perforce decide, by Bewick. The "Treatise on Wood-Engraving," indeed, speaking of them in a footnote (p. 480, edition 1861), says that "Bewick always denied that any of them were of his engraving." But, even if we had not Miss Bewick's authority for believing to the contrary, this is contradicted by the book itself, for no less than thirteen of the remaining fourteen cuts with borders are reproduced in the "Select Fables" of 1784, the illustrations of which are attributed to Bewick by common consent. It must therefore be conjectured either that Mr. Chatto misunderstood Bewick or his informant, or that he had not seen the very rare edition of 1776, which is now before us. So again, when Mr. J. G. Bell and Mr.

Hugo speak of the "miserable" illustrations of the earlier edition of the "Select Fables," it must be concluded that they were not aware that the edition of 1776 contained a number of the cuts afterwards printed in the volume of 1784. The smaller cuts are indifferent enough ; but the fourteen at the end are quite as good as those in the "Gay's Fables" published in 1779. It would be tedious to carry this purely bibliographical discussion farther ; but it so far disposes of one troublesome passage in the "Memoir," which states that, during his apprenticeship, Bewick was at work on the "Select Fables." That, before 1774, he could have been working at the edition published in 1784 is improbable ; but when it is explained that he prepared cuts for the edition of 1776, the words are no longer difficult to understand.

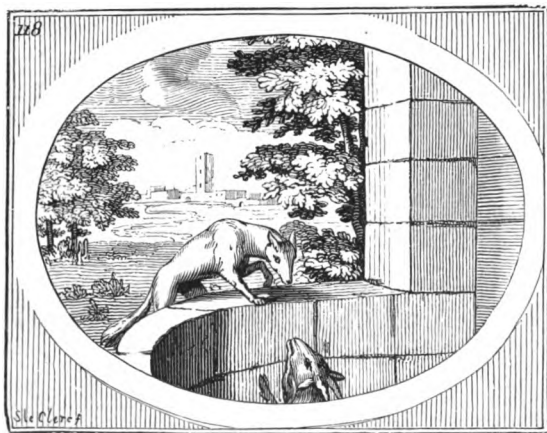
Most of the illustrations to the "Select Fables" of 1784 show a very marked advance upon those to the "Gay." The animals are better drawn, and the backgrounds and details more carefully studied. But the greatest improvement is in the

grouping. This, and the arrangement of black and white, are much more skilful and effective than before. As before, however, Bewick seems to have been contented to take an earlier work for the basis of his designs. There can be but little doubt that the one used was the "*Fables of Æsop and Others*," translated by Samuel Croxall, D.D., sometime Archdeacon of Hereford. This was one of the most popular books of the eighteenth century. First published by Tonson and Watts in 1722, by 1798 there had been no fewer than sixteen editions. In the "*Treatise on Wood-Engraving*" the author, discussing this collection at some length, appears to think that the illustrator, who deserves a better fame than he has obtained, was a certain E. Kirkall, to whose book-decorations Pope refers in the "*Dunciad*"—

"In flow'rs and pearls by bounteous Kirkall dress'd";

and who, we may add, enjoys the unenviable distinction of having pirated Hogarth's "*Harlot's Progress*" before that ill-used artist could issue his own prints. Mr. Chatto also points out that many of Croxall's cuts are apparently reversed

copies of copperplates by Sebastian le Clerc in an edition of "*Æsop*," published circa 1694.¹ It is possible, however, that the real originals may be looked for nearer home, since comparison of the Archdeacon's book with the fine old folio "*Æsop*"

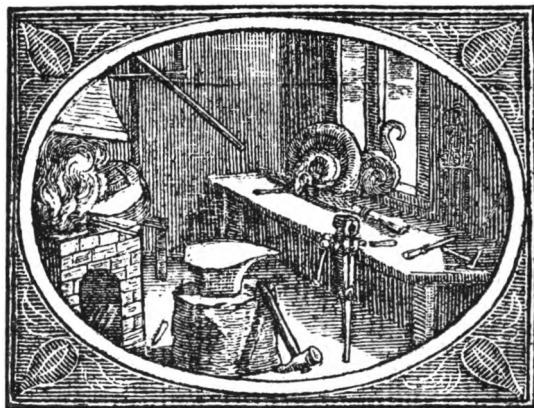


THE FOX AND THE GOAT. (FROM SEBASTIAN LE CLERC.)

of Francis Barlow, once "eminent in this line of Fowl and Beasts," and sold (as the engraved title-page has it) "at his House, The Golden

¹ We have failed to trace this edition. Jombert's "*Catalogue Raisonné*" of le Clerc's works, 1774, i. 281, does indeed refer to a set of "22 petits ovales en travers, sans le titre," in illustration of "*Æsop's Fables*," but goes on to say expressly: "*Cette suite . . . n'a servi à aucun livre.*"

Eagle, In New Street, near Shoo-Lane, 1665," reveals unmistakable affinities between the two, though it would perhaps be hazardous to declare that Croxall's designer copied from Barlow rather than le Clerc. A point of more material interest



THE VIPER AND THE FILE. (FROM CROXALL'S "FABLES," 1722.)

in connection with Croxall is, whether the cuts were engraved on wood or type-metal. Bewick, in the "Introduction" to the later "*Æsop*" of 1818, affirms the latter, though other authorities think it unlikely. Between experts it is dangerous to decide; but we are disposed to agree with Bewick. After carefully comparing Croxall's first edition of

1722 with his tenth of 1775, we are able to affirm *de visu* that the cuts in the latter, as impressions, are to the full as good as those in the former. It would have been difficult, we imagine, in the early days of the revival of woodcut-printing to



THE VIPER AND THE FILE. (FROM "SELECT FABLES," 1784.)

show many books of which this could be said, and we conceive it to be greatly in favour of the theory that the illustrations to Croxall were from engravings "on metal in the manner of wood." That this was practised is plain from the fact that the Society of Arts twice gave premiums to William Coleman for work of this very class.

To return, however, to Bewick and the "Select Fables" of 1784. It is scarcely necessary to show in detail in what the likeness to Croxall consists, as a couple of examples will amply suffice—the cuts to the "Viper and the File," and the "Young Man



THE YOUNG MAN AND THE SWALLOW. (FROM CROXALL'S "FABLES," 1722.)

and the Swallow." In the former Bewick has closely followed the earlier design. But the advantage in execution, in black and white, and in the superior fidelity of the accessories (*e.g.* the vice) is wholly on his side. So are the improvements in the relative proportions of the different objects—the viper of the old illustrator for size

might be a youthful boa constrictor. In the "Young Man and the Swallow" the deviations are more apparent than the resemblances, and little of similarity remains but in the attitude of the hero. The swallow which, in Croxall,



THE YOUNG MAN AND THE SWALLOW. (FROM "SELECT FABLES," 1784.)

assumes the proportions of a barn-door fowl is, in Bewick, reduced to reasonable dimensions. Croxall's spendthrift has literally denuded himself; but he of Bewick's drawing, like a civilised eighteenth-century rake, has only pawned his linen. Again, beyond the bare-boughed tree there is no particular suggestion of winter in

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Croxall ; but in Bewick there is obvious ice and men sliding upon it, while he has given to the chief figure a look of nose-nipped and shivering dilapidation which is wholly absent from its model. These specimens will show how Bewick dealt with Croxall when he employed him as a basis. But, as in the case of the "Gay," there are numerous instances where the invention appears to be wholly his own, and they are generally the happiest in the book. Take, for example, the charming little pictures of the "Wolf and the Lamb," and the "Proud Frog." Or (to choose some fables not given in Croxall at all) let us turn to the "Hounds in Couples," the "Beggar and his Dog," the "Collier and the Fuller." This last, especially, is a little *chef-d'œuvre* for truth to nature. The fuller with his bare legs and beater ; the grimy but not unfriendly collier ; the linen bleaching in long rows in the field behind, and the colliery works on the hill,—to say nothing of St. Nicholas's spire in the distance,—all these go to make up a whole not afterwards excelled by any of the famous tailpieces. Bewick was familiar

with fullers and colliers, with frogs and dogs, and what he knew intimately he could draw as no other man could.

In contrasting Bewick's work with that of the unknown illustrator of Croxall, and the illustrators of "Gay's Fables," it can scarcely be necessary



THE EAGLE AND THE CROW. (FROM "SELECT FABLES," 1784.)

to point out that we have no sort of intention to depreciate Bewick's gifts. That he should have chosen to work in a measure upon the lines of some of his predecessors is no reproach to him, since it is only what many greater men have done before and after him. "It was not the subject treated" (as Mr. Lowell says finely of Chaucer in similar case), "but himself, that was the new

thing." He brought to his designs an individuality, a personal character, which is wholly absent from his prototypes. His reproductions of animal life prove conclusively how infinitely superior in apprehension and insight he was to Barlow and Wootton, professed and popular animal painters; while as a delineator of character and humanity we must seek for his equals in ranks far higher than that of the charlatan William Kent. But his illustrations to these fables are interesting in another way. Those who admire his draughtsmanship have often asked themselves how he obtained his proficiency as an artist, for he certainly did not acquire it from "Copelands' Ornaments." The only answer given by his family is that "he used to go out and look at things, and then come home and draw them."¹ That is to say, he shared the instinctive perceptive faculty

¹ Bewick's daughters, it may be observed, could give but little definite information respecting the growth of their father's genius. Their appreciation of it was affectionate rather than enlightened; and they appear to have shrunk from admitting that he could possibly be indebted to anything but his own inborn creative power, even where natural objects were concerned.

and eye-memory of Hogarth and Wilkie; but this scarcely explains his skill in combining and arranging his material. If, however, we bear in mind that he spent so much of his early life in adapting, correcting, and modernising the designs of others, it requires no further argument to show that he studied in a school of composition which, whatever its restrictions, was yet of a practical and serviceable kind.



TAILPIECE. (FROM FERGUSON'S "POEMS," 1814.)

CHAPTER VI.

JOHN BEWICK.

IN designing and engraving the foregoing "Gay's Fables" (1779) and "Select Fables" (1784), it has been asserted that Bewick was assisted by his younger brother John, whom he had taken as an apprentice in 1777. In the "Advertisement" to an edition of the "Select Fables," published by Emerson Charnley of Newcastle in 1820,—an edition which, if it was not issued with Thomas Bewick's approval, was obviously issued within his knowledge,—this statement as regards those fables in particular is definitely made; and it is repeated by Bell and Chatto respecting both collections. Hugo also follows it with regard to the "Select Fables." On the other hand Atkinson's sketch is completely silent as to such a colla-

boration, although, by his own showing, the writer was acquainted with Charnley's book ; and there is no reference to it in the short account of John Bewick which appears in Mackenzie's "History of Northumberland." In Bewick's "Memoir," too, where some acknowledgment to this effect, if needful, might have been reasonably expected, there is not a word upon the subject. As a matter of fact, it is difficult to understand what material aid the younger brother could have rendered to the elder in the "Gay's Fables," seeing that he was only in the second year of his apprenticeship when it was first published. To the "Select Fables," the argument of inexperience does not apply with equal force ; but it may be noted that John Bewick's work, for many years subsequent to 1784, will not, either in draughtsmanship or engraving, sustain a comparison with the illustrations in that volume. Moreover—though this is of minor importance—for at least two years previous to its appearance, John Bewick had been resident in London. Upon the evidence of the books themselves—we may add—it is impossible

to arrive at a decision ; but the existence of this moot question may be our excuse for introducing here some brief account of John Bewick's less doubtful works.

According to the "Memoir of Thomas Bewick," John Bewick continued in his apprenticeship for about five years, when his brother "gave him his liberty," and he left Newcastle for London. Here he found immediate and active, though not lucrative employment, chiefly on blocks for children's books. Hugo's "Catalogue" gives us the titles of some of these—"The Children's Miscellany" (by Day of "Sandford and Merton" fame); the "Honours of the Table ; or, Rules for Behaviour during Meals ;" the "History of a Schoolboy ;" the "New Robinson Crusoe," and so forth,—publications which no doubt were highly popular with the "little Masters and Misses" in frill-collars and mob-caps, who resorted to Mr. Stockdale's in Piccadilly, or Mr. Newbery's at the "Bible and Sun" in St. Paul's Churchyard. The date of the "Robinson Crusoe" is 1788, and many of its cuts are signed. But the first work of real importance

attributed to John Bewick is an edition of Gay's "Fables," printed in the same year for J. Buckland and others, in which, with minor variations and some exceptions, the earlier designs of Thomas Bewick are followed. This book affords an opportunity of comparing the brothers on similar



ROBIN HOOD AND MAID MARIAN. (FROM RITSON'S "ROBIN HOOD," 1795.)

ground, and the superiority of the elder is incontestable. Next to this comes a volume which has usually been placed first, the "Emblems of Mortality," published by T. Hodgson in 1789. This is a copy of the famous "Icones" or "Imagines Mortis" of Holbein, from the Latin edition issued at Lyons in 1547 by Jehan Frellon, "Soubz l'escu de

Cologne," with a few supplementary cuts from the French edition of 1562. Hugo associates Thomas Bewick with John in this work; and we have certainly seen an edition which has both names on the title-page. The early writers, nevertheless,



ROBIN HOOD AND LITTLE JOHN. BY T. BEWICK. (FROM RITSON'S "ROBIN HOOD," 1795.)

assign it to John Bewick alone; and this view is, in our opinion, confirmed by the following extract from a letter of Thomas to John, published by Mr. Hancock of Newcastle in the "Natural History Transactions of Northumberland," etc., for 1877. "I am much pleased," says Thomas Bewick, "with the Cuts for 'Death's Dance,' and

wish much to have the book when it is done. I am surprized that you would undertake to do them for 6s. each. You have been spending your time and grinding out your eyes to little purpose indeed. I would not have done them for a farthing less than double that sum. . . . I am glad to find that you have begun on your own bottom, and I would earnestly recommend you to establish your character by taking uncommon pains with what work you do." The quotation seems to indicate that John Bewick had set up on his own account in November 1787, the date of the letter to which the above is an answer. It gives an idea besides of the prices paid for wood-engraving both in London and Newcastle, which, as may be seen, were on anything but a liberal scale.¹

Even in these days of Amand-Durand fac-similes, the "Emblems of Mortality" is a praiseworthy memento of those marvellous woodcuts

¹ Sometimes, too, they do not seem to have been paid at all. At a sale a few years ago there was sold an autograph letter of Thomas Bewick to Sir Richard Phillips of the "Million of Facts," in which reference was made to a bill for "Botanical Cuts" that had been outstanding for eleven years !

which, as we are now taught to believe, the obscure Hans Lutzelburger engraved after Holbein's designs. In detail, John Bewick's copies vary considerably from the originals ; and, in one instance, that of the "Creation," where the earlier illustrator has represented the first person of the Trinity in



THE DEATH OF ROBIN HOOD. (FROM RITSON'S "ROBIN HOOD," 1795.)

a papal tiara, his imitator, by editorial desire, has substituted a design of his own. But the spirit of the old cuts is almost always fairly preserved, and, considering the hasty and ill-paid character of the work, its general fidelity to Holbein is remarkable. After "Death's Dance" come a little group of books, chiefly intended for the education of children.

Of these it is impossible to give any detailed account, nor is it needful, since they have all a strong family resemblance. The two first, "Proverbs Exemplified" (1790) and the "Progress of Man and Society" (1791) are due to the excellent but wearisome Dr. Trusler, who, with the best



THE RECOMPENSE OF VIRTUE. (FROM THE "BLOSSOMS OF MORALITY," 1796.)

opportunities, has the honour of being the worst of Hogarth commentators. The former book is sufficiently described by its title; the latter is a kind of modern version of the old Latin and high Dutch "Orbis Pictus" of Comenius, published at Amsterdam in 1657. Both of these books are undoubtedly illustrated by John Bewick alone,

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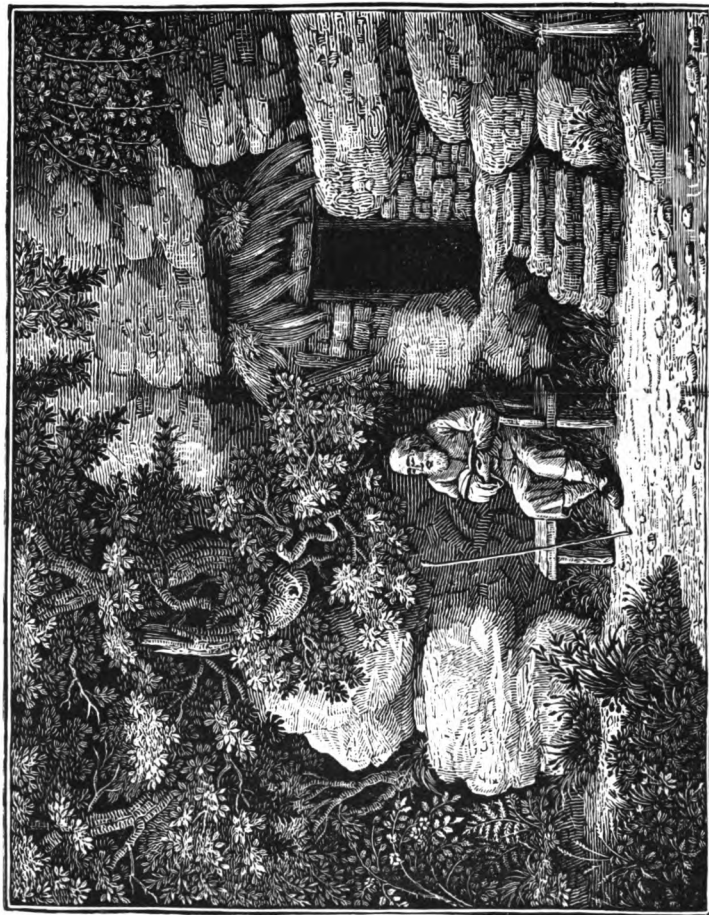
THE DEATH

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whose name is given in the preface to the "Proverbs." Besides these there are the "Looking Glass for the Mind" (1792), the charming little "Tales for Youth" (1794), "Robin Hood" (1795), and the "Blossoms of Morality" (1796).

The appearance of the "Blossoms of Morality" was for some time delayed in consequence of the illness of the artist, and long before it was published, John Bewick was sleeping in Ovingham Churchyard. His health had been early impaired by the close confinement of the Metropolis, and though a visit to Cherryburn seems to have partially restored him, he was finally obliged to return to his native air in the summer of 1795, and shortly afterwards died of consumption. In the year of his death was published a sumptuous edition of the "Poems of Goldsmith and Parnell," due to the enterprise of that energetic Novocastrian, William Bulmer, of the "Shakespeare Printing Office," whom his contemporaries fondly likened to the Bodonis and Elzevirs of old; and the preface proudly sets forth the excellences of its type, its printing, its Whatman



THE HERMIT.

By T. BEWICK, AFTER JOHN JOHNSON. (FROM "POEMS BY GOLDSMITH AND FARNELL," 1795.)

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paper, and its embellishments.¹ To this book John Bewick contributed one cut, drawn and engraved by him in illustration of the well-known passage in the "Deserted Village" respecting the old watercress gatherer. He is also understood to have designed two of the vignettes and one



ROBIN HOOD AND LITTLE JOHN. (FROM RITSON'S "ROBIN HOOD," 1795.)

of the tailpieces. During the last months of his life he was engaged in making sketches on the

¹ George III. is said to have declined to believe that the cuts were engraved on wood, and to have requested to be allowed to assure himself of the fact by inspecting the original blocks. But in these early days of woodcut art, even a George might be forgiven for not being a connoisseur. One of the best of the tailpieces represents His Majesty hunting the stag at Windsor.

block for the "Fabliaux" of Le Grand, translated by Way (1796); and for an edition of Somerville's "Chase," issued by Bulmer in the same year. These were chiefly engraved by Thomas Bewick, who, he says in the "Memoir," completed the drawings for the "Chase" after his brother's death. "The last thing (he adds sorrowfully) that I could do for him was putting up a stone to his memory at the west end of Ovingham Church, where I hope, when my 'glass is run out,' to be laid down beside him."

As is generally the case with those who die young, it is somewhat difficult to speak of John Bewick's merits as an artist and engraver. Much of his work bears evident signs of haste, as well as of an invention which was far in advance of his powers of execution. In the earlier books this is especially noticeable. He had plainly a keen eye for character, and considerable skill in catching strongly-marked expression. In the "Proverbs Exemplified," many of the little groups, though rudely rendered, are excellently "felt," and might easily be elaborated into striking studies. It is

not unnatural, perhaps, that Dr. Trusler should compare his illustrator to Hogarth; but in such designs as "All is not Gold that Glitters," and "Scald not your Lips with Another Man's Potage," the comparison is not wholly untenable. His animals, too, are often admirable—witness the

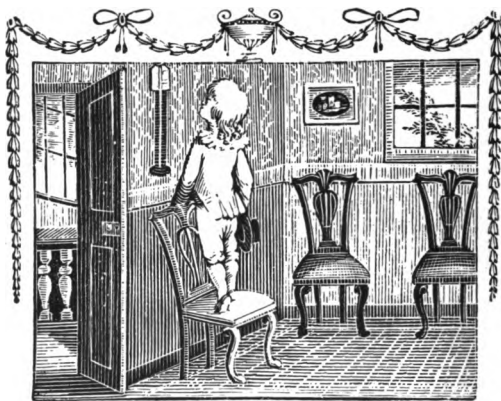


DOMESTIC SCENE. BY J. BEWICK. (SOURCE UNKNOWN.)

popular prowling cat in the "Tales for Youth," the hunting scenes in the "Chase" (*e.g.* the "Huntsman and Hounds," the "Home of the Otter"), and many of the vignettes in the children's books,¹ while he shared with his brother, though in a far

¹ A large proportion of these, however, are mere adaptations of Thomas Bewick's work.

less degree, the art of contriving effective backgrounds of rock-work and foliage. One distinctive quality he seems to have possessed, which is not to be found in Thomas Bewick, the quality of grace—a grace artificial indeed, as was much of the



LITTLE ANTHONY. (FROM THE "LOOKING-GLASS FOR THE MIND," 1792.)

grace of the eighteenth century, yet not without its charm. Whether he caught this from Stothard and the novel illustrators of the period we know not; but there are many examples of it in his work, notably in his treatment of children. Take, for instance, the trio of scholars in the "Progress of Man," who, with their hands on their hearts,



THE SAD HISTORIAN.

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DRAWN AND ENGRAVED BY JOHN BEWICK.

(FROM "POEMS BY GOLDSMITH AND PARNELL," 1795.)

are "making a leg" to their nightcapped and dressing-gowned preceptor. Or take again the charming picture in the "Looking Glass for the Mind," of the anxious little fellow who is standing on a chair to look at the barometer. As an engraver John Bewick does not in any way equal his brother. His manner is flatter, more conventional, less happy in the distribution of its light and shade. In his later work, however, he improved greatly in this respect, as may be seen by reference to the "Tales for Youth," which contain some of his best engraving, and to the watercress gatherer of the "Deserted Village."

Only one portrait of John Bewick is known to exist, and that is a crayon by George Gray, now in the Newcastle Natural History Society's Museum. Personally he seems to have been a young man of considerable wit and vivacity, and very popular with his associates—a popularity, if we may judge from certain passages in the "Memoir," not without its peril in the eyes of his graver elder brother. "He would not, as he called it, be dictated to by me; but this I per-

sisted in till it made us often quarrel, which was distressing to me, for my regard for him was too deeply rooted ever to think of suffering him to tread in the paths which led to ruin, without endeavouring to prevent it. To the latest day of his life, he repented of having turned a deaf ear to my advice ; and as bitterly and sincerely did he acknowledge the slighted obligations he owed me. He *rued* ; and that is as painful a word as any in the English language." Something in this, no doubt, must be allowed for the Spartan austerity of the disciple of Lewis Cornaro, and it is not probable that poor John Bewick's errors went farther than a certain smartness in costume, and occasional convivial excesses.

At the time of his death he was engaged upon the block of Cherryburn, afterwards used as a frontispiece to the "Memoir." He did not live to complete it ; and it was eventually finished by Thomas Bewick. The original sketch, probably made much earlier, together with his punch-ladle and glass, some water-colour drawings, and other relics, is carefully preserved at the old home by

his grandnieces, who still speak affectionately of their "Uncle John's" talents and amiability. At the recent Bewick sale another memento of him came under the hammer. This was a walking-stick, containing a hautboy, with which (as per



LEONORA AND ADOLPHUS. (FROM THE "LOOKING-GLASS FOR THE MIND," 1792.)

catalogue) he is said to have "amused himself in his summer-evening strolls about Hornsey and the banks of the Thames." In the last months of his life, it should be added, he alternated engraving with teaching, being employed as drawing-master at the "Hornsey Academy," then kept by a Mr. Nathaniel Norton. Two or three unfinished

sketches made by him at this time—one of which shows his pony and his lodgings—are included in the Bewick bequest to the British Museum. Another, dated 1795, the year of his death, has a touch of pathos. It represents his “intended house” on the water bank at Eltringham.



TAILPIECE. (FROM RITSON'S "ROBIN HOOD," 1795.)

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